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## WAGE CEILING IN FLORIDA CITRUS GROVES, SEASON OF 1943-44

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The fight against inflation and the effort to reduce the turn-over of labor in essential industries during World War II made necessary official control of labor and wages in agriculture as well as in other industries. These programs included the setting of ceiling wage rates for specific operations in various areas. The official reports issued concerning specific programs have related mostly to those of the Pacific Coast. <sup>1/</sup> Concerning the operation of the wage ceiling rates set for citrus harvesting in Florida no previous report has been published.

This report concerning the operation of the wage ceilings set for citrus picking in Florida relates to the season of 1943-44 only, although such rates were set after that. It is based on data gathered by the writer and two other members <sup>2/</sup> of the United States Department of Agriculture who visited Florida in July 1944. Information was obtained from citrus growers, packers, fruit pickers, and State and Federal officials both by interview and by study of accounts and records.

Florida citrus growers and packers have varied relationships. Few individual citrus growers pick and pack their own fruit for market. A packer may be an individual, a growers' cooperative association, or a corporation. A packer may own and operate acreage of his own; he may grow no fruit, but buy all he packs; he may operate the groves of the owners whose fruit he packs. A packer usually hires the pickers, furnishes equipment, and picks and hauls the fruit to his packinghouse. There are also contractors who only pick and haul fruit to a packinghouse or processing plant. These contractors are commonly called "bird-dogs," a term often used disparagingly because their practices are sharply competitive with those of the packinghouses. To some extent, "bird-dogs" can operate more cheaply and pay their pickers more per box than can packinghouses. During the season 1943-44 they were not subject to the same controls as were packinghouses.

Most citrus pickers are Negro men. Occasionally Negro women pick. A boy may help a man, and the man gets credit for the work of both. There are areas in which no whites pick, and few in which they make up a majority of pickers. Negroes and whites seldom pick in the same crews. Nearly all pickers in the 1943-44 season appeared experienced despite the drop in labor supply. Some

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<sup>1/</sup> A history of the program of the stabilization of farm wages in the United States has been issued: Holmaas, Arthur J. Agricultural wage stabilization in World War II. Bur. Agr. Econ. Agriculture Monograph No. 1. 140 pp. Washington, D. C. 1950.

<sup>2/</sup> Thomas W. Skuce and Waller Wynne, then of the Office of Labor.



took pride in being members of crews which had held together for years well enough to develop good team spirit, and to make good work records. Pickers usually are recruited from localities near packinghouses. Their employers transport them to and from groves which may be 20 or more miles away.

Turn-over of labor in picking crews is considerable in spite of efforts to reduce it. One packer's records showed that it took 194 men during the season to keep up crews averaging 86.9 pickers; the number working on one or more days in a single week ranged from 77 to 96. Not all employers' records were as good as this, as shown by another crew in which 58 men were employed during the season to maintain an average of 15.4 pickers. Half of the 58 worked 4 weeks or less. Only one in eight worked with the crew more than two-thirds of the season.

Actual daily working hours for citrus pickers are not likely to be more than 6 or 7, especially in winter. Pickers occasionally complained of working days of only 4 or 5 hours. Some packers are inclined to talk of 8 and even 9-hour days; doubtless they include time on the road between groves and packinghouses, which makes up part of the working time of truck drivers, but not of pickers. Working days usually average shortest in winter. They are subject to interruption and shortening by weather, wet trees, lack of field boxes, and time on the road between groves and packinghouses.

Pickers are paid per standard field box 3/ except when difficult or slow picking compels payment of hourly rates to assure the pickers reasonable earnings. Time rates are profitable to growers only when prices of fruit are exceptionally high.

Pickers seldom receive perquisites other than transportation between groves and their home localities or packinghouses. They rarely get housing. 4/

Data obtained showed that wage rates for picking budded oranges tend to be about one-fourteenth of the average price received at the packinghouse door for sales of fruit. Picking seedling oranges often costs twice as much.

The picking of oranges begins early in October. By December it is nearly at its height. The season lasts into May, and tapers off to an end usually in late June. The grapefruit season tends to be shorter at each end. In 1944, picking oranges continued in some groves well into July before late-bloom fruit was off the trees. Tangerine picking begins about December 1; it is somewhat irregular, depending partly upon the market. Most of it is finished by March.

Picking citrus fruit for market is really the cutting or clipping of the stem. To clip properly and rapidly requires skill. The skins of fruit picked for market must not be punctured or torn lest the fruit spoil quickly; consequently, few oranges and no tangerines can be pulled, although a few grapefruit are. Cannery fruit may be pulled, as it is processed before it can spoil because of broken skin.

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3/ Capacity, 4,800 cubic inches, or slightly under  $2\frac{1}{4}$  bushels; weight of fruit, 80-90 pounds.

4/ Employers of officially imported alien labor were required during the war to provide housing which had to meet standards set by placement officials.



The United States Department of Agriculture as of January 1, 1944, estimated that the numbers of agricultural laborers in the South Atlantic States had dropped from 340,000 to 321,000 in 3 years. This numerical drop was not so significant to employers as was the apparent loss of experienced labor, even though it was partly replaced by inexperienced workers.

While the labor supply was slowly dropping, the volume of the citrus crop in Florida was rapidly rising. In the 10 years 1930-39, it averaged 36,000,000 boxes; in the season of 1940-41, 56,000,000 boxes; and in that of 1943-44 it reached nearly 81,000,000 boxes.

Prevailing wage rates for picking budded oranges rose from 6 to 8 cents per box in the season of 1940-41 to 12 to 15 cents per box or higher at the beginning of the 1943-44 season. Pickers were asking for higher wage rates and earnings with which to meet increased costs of living.

Citrus crops had little competition for labor from other crops because of the higher earnings possible in the groves; nor from packinghouses, because most of the packers are white women, and most of the heavy work there is done by white men.

But other industries were competing with the citrus industry for labor. The armed services were taking men. Citrus producers, subject to price restrictions on their sales, wanted to reduce their financial problems, to reduce labor turn-over in the groves, and to be sure of sufficient labor to harvest and pack their crops.

Thus, at the opening of the 1943-44 season, Florida citrus growers were faced with a record crop, a declining labor supply, and labor demands for increased wage rates.

Voluntary efforts by growers and packers to control wage rates for citrus picking in the seasons of 1941-43 had not worked well.

The Emergency Price Control Act of 1942 and Executive Orders of the President gave authority for the control of agricultural wage rates.

The setting of wage rates for the Florida citrus harvest was desired by many producers. At their request, the Florida Citrus Commission on October 12, 1943, asked the War Food Administration to hold a hearing to ascertain whether the citrus industry wished wages stabilized for the season's harvest, and if so, at what rates.

The Florida Extension Service, already active in the distribution of farm labor within the State, was consulted by the growers and packers. It recommended that the Administration set up a wage board with authority to hold hearings and make recommendations as to ceiling rates for the harvest.

The Growers Administrative Committee, and the Florida Citrus Commission cooperated in requesting the formation of the Florida Agricultural Wage Stabilization Board, and, after its organization, in facilitating its work.

No citrus pickers' organization actively urged wage rate stabilization.



The War Food Administration created the Florida Agricultural Wage Stabilization Board in response to the request. Its five members and their alternates represented Federal and State agencies and citrus growers and packers.

Public hearings to ascertain the need of citrus harvest wage stabilization were held November 10, 1943, at Lakeland, and the next day at Orlando. Both cities were centers of citrus production; and State organizations of growers, packers, and pickers had offices there. Notices of the hearings sent to the growers and packers and published in the press were sufficient for them, but apparently not for the pickers. Many of the latter do not receive newspapers, and they were not sufficiently organized to assist in wide distribution of the notices.

The attendance at, and participation in the hearings, was predominantly that of growers and packers. They offered effective testimony for their purposes. In contrast, the few pickers present were at a loss to give data adequate to prove their need for the ceiling wage rates they asked, and higher than those later put into effect. After the hearings the United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing, and Allied Workers of America, Local 4, C.I.O., protested that the Board did not give its representatives a fair hearing, and did not properly investigate the citrus pickers' actual earnings and costs of living.

#### THE WAGE CEILING PROGRAM IN OPERATION

When the War Food Administrator set the citrus ceiling wage rates (table 1) he designated the Florida USDA Wage Board to make adjustments when the rates originally set caused hardships, and investigations showed that adjustments were desirable. The Board was also empowered to conduct hearings concerning alleged violations of the ceiling rates (as was done once), to make findings of fact, and to make recommendations.

Table 1.--Principal citrus picking wage rates asked and set, 1943-44 season, Fla.

Work	: Asked at hearings by :		Ceiling rates set	
	: Packers :	: Pickers :	: After : hearings :	: Most common : adjustments :
	Cents	Cents	Cents	Cents
Picking, per box				
---Budded oranges	14	20	15 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub>	20
---Seedling oranges	25	30-35	25	30-35
---Grapefruit	8	13-14	8 <sup>2</sup> / <sub>2</sub>	10-12
---Tangerines	30	40	30	50
Picking per hour	70	---	75	75

1/ For picking from canopy-type trees, requiring ladders 30 or more feet in length, 25 cents.

2/ For picking and loading equivalent measure in bulk on truck in grove, 8 cents.



To make needed adjustments in ceiling wage rates it had been intended to use local committees. But the urgency for immediate adjustments after the setting of the original ceiling wage rates was such that two men were appointed by the Florida Agricultural Wage Statistics Board for the purpose. They divided the citrus area between themselves, and investigated requests for wage raises. They made recommendations to the Chairman of the Wage Board who usually accepted them and notified the applicants as promptly as possible. When quicker decisions were urgently needed, the investigators risked making them on the spot, and notified the Chairman accordingly. He never overruled them. Investigation by the two men resulted in more nearly uniform adjustments than probably would have been made by local committees.

But the situation had its difficulties. Both investigators had regular positions and duties. When they made investigations, each worked partly on his employer's time, and partly outside of and in addition to his regular working hours. This created hardship for the employers and especially for the investigators when the work was heavy. There were some complaints that adjustments were not promptly investigated. The two investigators were unable to give all the attention needed to areas of South Florida and along the Gulf Coast where the fruit was light and competition for labor was keen. Indications are that in that area packinghouses sometimes paid more than ceiling rates without the knowledge of the Board, although not more than rates granted elsewhere in making adjustments. Plainly, two men were not fully adequate for the task of investigating requests for wage adjustments. Some persons stated that the Federal Government should have provided funds with which to employ full-time investigators to handle adjustment requests more promptly, and to follow up the occasional reports of violations of the ceiling wage rates set.

Regardless of its shortcomings, this administrative set-up was fairly successful. Growers and packers stated emphatically that without it they would have lost thousands of dollars in moving their citrus, would have had a much greater turn-over of labor, and might have not been able to harvest all the crop because of labor troubles. A part of the credit for this success is due to the Chairman of the Board, whom many believed to be largely responsible for obtaining the cooperation of the citrus industry. A part is due to the growers and packers who, as a whole, complied with the intent of the wage stabilization orders.

Citrus pickers usually reported that they were satisfied with the administration of the ceiling wage rates. They knew that the rates were officially set and in general appeared to consider them reasonable, although those who had asked for higher rates were not fully satisfied. But pickers interviewed sometimes showed not enough information had reached them to enable them to understand the origin, purposes, and terms of the Wage Board's orders.

Publicity concerning adjustments in wage rates was inadequate. Consequently, there were some misunderstandings of adjustments, which were always upward, to enable pickers to make fair earnings in spite of poor picking, and to enable growers to harvest their crops. Some growers felt themselves left in unfair competitive positions. Fortunately, any adverse results were local, of short duration, and of small effect. Most pickers soon learned that it would do them no good to quit their jobs to seek others on which earnings would be greater. Consequently, the turn-over of labor was reduced.

The ceiling wage rates first set by the Board became at once the going rates in most areas. In a few spots of scattered light picking, immediate adjustments were asked and granted.



Wage adjustments were granted during the season to 917 groves; 32 rates were involved. Groves for which adjustments were made were located in 25 counties; they centered in Orange and Polk Counties where production of citrus was largest. The estimate of the amount of fruit involved was 3,250,000 boxes, or about 4 percent of the season's crop. Most of the applicants requested adjustments for only a few groves.

The causes of requests for adjustments in wage ceilings centered around height of trees, canopied tree tops, length of ladders required, light crops, and scattered picking.

#### THE SEASON'S LABOR SUPPLY

War demands reduced the supply of experienced citrus labor. Growers feared a shortage as early as the season of 1941-42. But there was no serious lack of labor in that or the next season; not even in that of 1943-44. And this was despite successively lower labor supplies and larger crops. None of the 31 packinghouses visited during the field study reported losses of fruit because they were unable to hire pickers for the 80,000,000 box crop of the latter season.

In August, the Florida Emergency Farm Labor Office published an estimate that 10,000 workers would be needed from outside their area, and 4,000 to carry on production operations. They appear to have thought in terms of the "normal" labor supply of the depression years; to have underestimated the available labor supplies; and to have overestimated the needs for outside labor. They plainly sought a labor supply sufficient to discourage demands for wage increases.

Most Florida citrus pickers live in the citrus area, but some additional workers are employed. Some come each year from farms of the Southeastern States, and begin leaving in February to return to work their own farms; within a month all these are gone.

Governmental authorities moved in out-of-State labor during the season. The Florida Extension Service moved 1,700 workers to the citrus area, with the understanding that they would work there for at least 60 days. Most of them stayed; but some left, dissatisfied with working, living, and earning conditions. Little effort was made to hold them because there were sufficient pickers to meet needs.

In addition to the domestic workers, a small number of Bahamians and Jamaicans were obtained for picking and cannery-house work. The conditions under which they were obtained gave their employers a measure of control over them. The presence of these and of out-of-State workers tended, in the opinion of some employers, to offer job competition sufficient to make local labor more steady and efficient.

The "work or fight" orders issued in limited areas reduced loafing in public.

Generally speaking, there appears to have been more nearly full employment of labor available for citrus work in the 1943-44 season than in earlier years, due to the somewhat shorter labor supply, the large crop, and the long season.



If the picking of 1,500,000 boxes in a week may be considered "full employment", the season offered citrus pickers 30 weeks of it. About 9,300 full-time pickers, loaders, and truck drivers could handle 1,500,000 boxes a week. Some fruit was picked during another 8 weeks. Light picking began early in October. Not until November did the number of boxes picked exceed a million in a week. In 30 weeks of the season, picking exceeded 1,500,000 boxes, including 19 weeks when production amounted to more than 2,500,000 boxes. Picking is usually finished in June, but considerable late-bloom fruit was picked in July 1944.

Of the 80,000,000 boxes of citrus fruit picked in the 1943-44 season, oranges made up 57 percent, grapefruit 38 percent, and tangerines, 4 percent. About 90 percent of the oranges are from budded trees.

Using data obtained during the survey, the number of full-time workers needed to pick 1,500,000 boxes of citrus fruit in a week of  $5\frac{1}{2}$  days may be estimated at 8,000. In addition, about 1,300 workers such as loaders and truck drivers would be needed. In the peak week of the season of 1943-44, 2,918,000 boxes of fruit were picked. This would make full employment for 18,000 workers. In addition, there were perhaps 20 percent additional in the citrus-grove labor force,--those not actually at work because of weather and market conditions, or for personal reasons. Thus an estimated labor force of close to 22,000 would be needed to furnish sufficient workers to get the 2,918,000 boxes of fruit off the trees and into the packinghouses. It is to be noted that the Emergency Farm Labor Office estimated that 24,000 workers would be needed in January 1944.

The difference in these estimates supports the conclusion that maximum employment is usually not available to all workers even when picking is at its height, and that there is consequently much involuntary idleness among the pickers.

#### PICKERS' WEEKLY EARNINGS

Thinking and opinion on employment and earnings of pickers is confused by factors such as days when fruit cannot be picked, by turn-over in crew members, and by the different points of view and motives of those discussing the matter.

Reports on pickers' weekly work attendance and earnings were obtained from data presented by packers at public hearings and from records of packinghouses visited.

Citrus packers naturally desired to keep wages down. Consequently, in giving testimony at hearings they tended to exaggerate pickers' earnings. This was clearly shown at the end of the 1943-44 season when the Wage Board requested packinghouses to submit statements concerning them. Those submitted were for various crews in various weeks of the season. Many plainly referred to weeks of exceptionally favorable picking and high earnings (table 2). They reported earnings averaging 50 percent higher, and in one case, nearly double the figures obtained by members of the survey party from packinghouse records. Thus, the data of table 2 are not supported by the records of a representative packinghouse (table 3) nor by others obtained. Pickers for this house earned an average of \$22.71 per



week for the season. This is less than \$25, the amount which pickers testified at a hearing was needed to pay the living costs of a family of two adults and two children. In only 16 of 36 weeks did they earn more than that amount picking for this particular packinghouse (table 3A).

Table 2.-Lowest and highest average earnings of citrus pickers, 1943-44 season, reported to Wage Board by packinghouses.

Report	: Days worked	: Amount earned per picker		
	: per week	: per week	: per day	
	<u>Number</u>	<u>Dollars</u>	<u>Dollars</u>	
Lowest	5.0	29.17	5.80	
Highest	6.0	57.09	9.52	

Table 3.-Average weekly earnings of citrus pickers, by numbers of days worked per week for a packinghouse, 1943-44 season

Average days worked per week	: Average earnings: : per picker	Weeks in which average earnings were				
		: Under \$15	: \$15-\$24.99	: \$25-\$34.99	: \$35 or more	

A. All pickers

<u>Days</u>	<u>Dollars</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Number</u>
Under 3.6	15.44	4	5	0	0
3.6 - 4.0	22.42	0	9	4	0
4.1 - 4.5	27.28	0	1	10	0
4.6 - 5.0	26.14	0	1	1	0
5 or more	30.80	0	0	1	0
Season (36 weeks)	22.71	4	16	16	0

B. Pickers working the average days worked per week by their crews, or longer.

Under 3.6	14.23	1	1	0	0
3.6 - 4.0	21.13	0	3	0	0
4.1 - 4.5	24.75	0	1	2	1
4.6 - 5.0	30.88	0	3	5	4
5.1 - 5.5	31.01	0	0	5	1
5.5 - 6.6	33.93	0	0	5	4
Season (36 weeks)	30.08	1	8	17	10

Even those of the same crew who worked the average number of days per week worked by crew members or longer averaged barely more than \$30 per week for the season. In a fourth of the weeks they earned less than \$25. Earnings rarely went above that unless they worked more than  $4\frac{1}{2}$  days in the week (table 3B).

Data from two other packinghouses showed their pickers' average weekly earnings in the seasons of 1942-43 and 1943-44. In the first season, the earnings per week were \$26.73 at one, and \$28.78 at the other. In the 1943-44



season the corresponding figures were \$31.15 and \$30.49. Highest weekly averages were \$48.35 and \$43.89, respectively. And these were at large packinghouses which furnished relatively steady employment 5/.

It is sometimes said that citrus pickers make \$100 a week. Data from one packinghouse showed the amounts earned there by individual pickers each week in the season of 1943-44. Half the time they were under \$37. In only 5 weeks did they exceed \$50, once reaching almost \$70.

On the whole, earnings per man in the season of 1943-44 were apparently slightly higher than in the year earlier. Earnings in 1943-44 were not far from \$30 per week; amounts much higher were unusual. From one packinghouse the records of individual earnings for the full season showed that less than a fourth of the pickers averaged as much as \$6 per day worked, and that none averaged more than \$7.34.

Pickers who worked for large packinghouses earned the most money. Those at small houses had less steady work, and earned less. And small houses packing under 300,000 boxes in a season made up 86 percent of the packinghouses, but packed only 48 percent of the fruit in the 1943-44 season. Records obtained indicated that in the large houses earnings of pickers were about \$30 per week; in the smaller ones, \$25 or less.

These data do not support the claims of some persons that pickers' earnings average \$40 per week, and often are much more.

If it took \$25 a week to support a family of four, pickers seldom earned a "surplus" that encouraged absenteeism if they had any foresight for the future.

#### PICKERS' WORK PER WEEK

During most of the season of 1943-44, the larger packinghouses picked fruit  $5\frac{1}{2}$  days a week when weather and market conditions permitted. Usually they did not pick on Saturday afternoons, and seldom on Sundays.

During the season there were theoretically 209 working days in 38 weeks of  $5\frac{1}{2}$  days each. How many of these were actually full working days was not ascertained. Probably crews average no more than 6 or 7 hours picking per day, nor do they average full weeks. Time is lost because of dew on trees, rain, shortage of field boxes, and moving from one grove to another during the day. Whole days may be lost because of weather or lack of picking when market conditions are unfavorable.

Apparently few pickers work every day, week after week. Those particularly inclined to criticize citrus labor say that pickers work only long enough to earn

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5/ Of interest are the data of a survey by the Bureau of Agricultural Economics for the pay week ended nearest February 22, 1945. Ceiling wage rates were practically unchanged. Citrus pickers' earnings were reported to average \$1.02 per hour, \$7.70 per day, and \$31.70 per week. Working time averaged 7.56 hours per day, and 4.12 days per week. Ducoff, Louis J., and Hagood, Margaret Jarman. Wages and Wage Rates of Seasonal Farm Workers in Special Crop Areas of Florida, February - March 1945. Bur. Agr. Econ. Surveys of Wages and Wage Rates in Agriculture, Report No. 1. 18 pp. Washington, D. C. May 1945.



money with which to loaf part time, particularly, on Saturdays and Mondays. This cannot be wholly true. Working 6 days a week allows one no time in which to care for personal matters. Consequently, time is taken from work, often without notice to employers.

Some employers recognize the reasonableness of pickers' need for time off, and do not ask their crews to work on Saturday afternoons. These employers reported that they obtained better work attendance; and more fruit picked on Saturdays than before. Absence from work on Mondays is considerable. This may be caused by loafing, recovery from week-end drinking, or sleeping late after Sunday evening affairs. That pickers' work attendance and production is much better in the middle than at the ends of the week is indicated by the record of all fruit passing through the packinghouses of the State. In the season of 1943-44, Monday's picking was the lowest of the week; Wednesday's was 56 percent larger; Saturday's picking was only 10 percent above Monday's, due both to the half-day worked by many crews and to some pickers not working.

Data from one packinghouse support these statements. In 11 weeks, an average of 35.2 pickers worked. The range was from 33.4 on Mondays to 42.3 on Thursdays; but on the average only 22.6 worked on the Saturday half-days. The plant manager stated that before the Saturday half-day was adopted, it was hard to get enough fruit picked for the Monday morning run in the packinghouse. After the half-day was adopted, enough men reported to pick the needed fruit.

Employers who complained of excessive absenteeism often claimed that high earnings made it possible for pickers to loaf part of the time until they ran out of money.

But there is evidence that high earnings which permitted loafing were not the important causes of absenteeism that some employers contended. Picking is hard work, even under favorable conditions. Pickers sometimes took time off to rest after working unusually hard. Packinghouse records showed repeatedly that after a man had picked much more than his usual quantities of fruit his performance dropped to half or two-thirds of usual, or even less for a day or two; or he might not work at all. To be more specific, those who picked 60 boxes of oranges, 125 of grapefruit, or 40 of tangerines in a day usually found the pace too hard to maintain, and, after a day or two, they slumped in performance.

#### PICKERS' WORK PER DAY

At the wage hearings, testimony was given by operators of packinghouses and by pickers as to the numbers of boxes of fruit pickers could handle per day. Data obtained from packinghouse records showed actual performance (table 4).

Table 4.--Estimates of fruit picked per man-day in unmixed picking.

Fruit	:Testimony at hearings by		: Data obtained during	
	:Packinghouse operators:		Pickers: this survey	
	Boxes	Boxes	Boxes	Boxes
Budded oranges	50 - 75	40 - 50		43.4
Seedling oranges	35 - 60	35		26
Grapefruit	100 - 150	80 - 90		82
Tangerines	15 - 40	25 - 30		22



From the records of a packinghouse, figures were obtained as to actual picking of budded oranges when no other fruit was handled the same day (table 5).

Table 5.--Boxes picked per man-day when picking budded oranges only, season of 1943-44

Boxes picked	Reports	
	Number	Percent of total cases
<u>Number</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Under 20	148	7.2
20 - 29	252	12.4
30 - 39	464	22.8
40 - 49	537	26.3
50 - 59	326	16.0
60 - 79	253	12.4
80 or more	59	2.9
Total	2,039	100.0
Average per day, 43.4 boxes.		

Table 5 furnishes a basis for estimating picking performance in fruit other than budded oranges. Earnings in picking budded oranges are generally accepted as bases for setting rates for picking the other fruits so that the earnings are not too different. If picking 43.4 boxes of budded oranges is taken as the average daily work of a picker, then to earn the same amount at the 1943-44 ceiling rates set after the hearings, a man would have had to pick about 26 boxes of seedling oranges, 82 of grapefruit, and 22 of tangerines (table 4, last column). These figures tend to support the testimony of pickers rather than those of packers, 6/ as to average daily production.

Most pickers prefer to pick budded oranges, because, they say, they can earn more than on other fruit. The trees are lower, and the work is easier. A few data obtained during the study tend to confirm this. When budded oranges only were picked, nearly a fourth of the pickers earned \$8 a day or more.

But picking during a week, and often in a day, is usually of different kinds of fruit and under varying conditions. Records from a packinghouse for 10 weeks in each of the two seasons showed the numbers of boxes of fruit picked per man-day in mixed picking (table 6). Earnings at 1943-44 ceiling rates for this mixed picking would have been \$5.47 per day if the oranges picked had been budded oranges, and \$7.36 if they had been all seedlings (which would seldom be true).

6/ The 1945 survey by Ducoff and Hagood reported that citrus pickers averaged per day 53 boxes of budded oranges, 28 of seedling oranges, 68 of grapefruit, and 26 boxes of tangerines per day. These figures plainly referred to picking only one kind of fruit per day; they did not include the slower picking of oranges from canopy type trees.



Table 6.-Fruit picked per man-day in mixed picking in 10 different weeks in the seasons 1942-43 and 1943-44

Fruit	Average numbers of boxes picked per	
	man-day, in the season of	
	1942 - 43	1943 - 44
	<u>Boxes</u>	<u>Boxes</u>
Oranges	17.1	18.9
Grapefruit	31.2	28.8
Tangerines	.9	1.1
Other	.1	0
All kinds	49.3	48.8

Individually, the pickers' production of fruit varied from nominal to the rare cases of very high. Men who made high records were sometimes reported to have had help, and crew foremen to have credited to one man the picking done by him and his helper. Thus, one picker was reported to have picked 151 boxes of Valencias in a day, 778 in a week, and to have earned nearly \$117. Actually, the crew with which he worked that week did far better than the average. Plainly, "high rollers" were picking under better than average conditions, and some of the pickers may have had helpers. Reports such as this start the not uncommon exaggerated rumors that citrus pickers make \$100 a week steadily.

#### CONCLUSIONS

The study upon which this report is based showed that control of wage rates in the Florida citrus harvest of 1943-44 was reasonably satisfactory and successful, despite limited adjustment services and publicity of its purposes and activities. Credit is due to all workers in the industry for compliance with the spirit of the program. Under it, pickers who worked for the larger packing-houses averaged about \$30 per week on the average; but pickers who worked for the smaller houses, \$25 or less. Reports of earnings averaging more than \$40 a week were exceptional. Pickers' actual working time daily and weekly was subject to considerable interruption, thus reducing opportunity to earn. There was considerable idleness, for some of which there was no control.